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Spirits and Spooks



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Winning Widow, 2 acts, 1½ hrs. (25c)	2	4
Zaragueta, 2 acts, 2 hrs...(35c)	7	4

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 623 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago

SPIRITS AND SPOOKS

A FARCE IN ONE ACT

BY

GUY L. CLEMENTS



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

PS635
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SPIRITS AND SPOOKS

FOR FIVE MEN AND ONE WOMAN.

CHARACTERS.

PROF. SPOOK.....*A Supernatural Scientist*
PROF. JONES.....*A Transmigration Bug*
FERDINAND.....*In Love With Ima*
SAMBO.....*A Husky, Dusky Invalid*
NICK.....*A Terrible Spy*
IMA SPOOK.....*The Inventor's Daughter*

PLACE—*The Home of the Spooks.*

TIME—*Around the Witching Hour.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Thirty-Five Minutes.*

COSTUMES.

PROFESSORS SPOOK and JONES—Two rather eccentric, old fashioned, college profs., of about sixty years of age. Beards, long coats and skull caps.

FERDINAND—A typical, well-dressed dude, not overly blessed with brains. Tall stand-up collar, bright red neck-tie, gloves, eyeglass and cane.

NICK—Large dark eyebrows and a black mustache. Wears dark suit and black cap.

SAMBO—Comedy negro makeup.

IMA—Young, pretty and romantic.

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W. L.

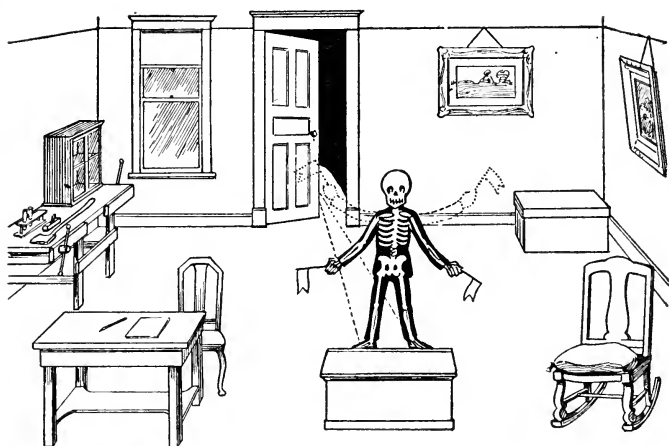


FIGURE 1.

Figure 1.—Stage setting for "Spirits and Spooks."

Figure 2.—Rear view of "spirit machine," showing arrangement of strings to raise and lower arms from behind the scenes.

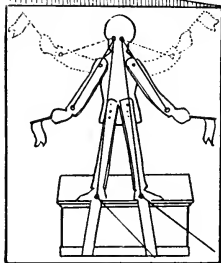


FIGURE 2.

NOTE.—The "spirit machine" consists of an upright apparatus with two movable arms attached in such a manner that they may be manipulated from behind the scenes with strings. A wig-wag signal flag is attached to each arm. A board, cut out in the form of a man, should be painted black with white bones, to represent a skeleton, and nailed to uprights. This arrangement is then mounted on a large black box large enough to contain a man and a dog and with a hinged lid. The whole machine is lightly constructed in such a manner that it may be easily kicked to pieces from the inside. (See drawings.)

STORY OF THE PLAY.

Prof. Spook, inventor of a machine to communicate with the other world, believes his failure to receive a message is due to the ignorance of the spirits in regard to the scientific principles upon which his machine works. He is about to sacrifice his life in order to prove his theory, when he gets the idea of teaching an invalid how to work the machine and then waiting for him to die. With this in mind he engages Sambo as his assistant. But becoming impatient at Sambo's good health he decides to hurry matters with a little poison. Sambo's life is saved by a spy who is trying to discover the secret of the invention. Prof. Spook, thinking he has murdered Sambo, becomes frightened and disappears. Prof. Jones, who believes in the transmigration of the soul, thinking Prof. Spook to be dead, finds Sambo's dog in the spirit machine and believes it to be the soul of Prof. Spook. The dog and Prof. Spook finally turn up together, much to the consternation and surprise of all, and no one is any the worse for the weird experiment in supernaturalism.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

Up stage means away from footlights; *down stage*, near footlights. In the use of *right* and *left*, the actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

SPIRITS AND SPOOKS

SCENE: *A laboratory in the home of Professor Spook. There is a door in the center of the rear wall, with an electric light switch alongside. (If stage facilities require, the door may be right or left instead of center.) The spirit machine is in the center of the room. A table is at right and slightly nearer the footlights. A black chest is up left. Several chairs, and other furniture and equipment appropriate to an inventor's laboratory are placed about the room.*

AT RISE: *The stage is dark. NICK is discovered examining the room with a pocket electric flashlight. He goes to door and turns the switch. Lights up.*

NICK. At last I have found ze machine. Now to discover ze secret of ze invention to talk with ze dead. (*Goes to machine and starts to make an examination.*)

IMA (*off stage*). Father!

NICK. Some one is coming. I must not be found here. (*Quickly switches off lights and hides in chest, using flashlight to find it.*)

Enter IMA and FERDINAND. IMA switches on lights.

IMA. That's strange! I was sure we saw a light in the laboratory and supposed we would find father here.

FERD. Deuced strange, by jove. The room certainly did appear to be illuminated. But perhaps it was merely the moon's rays shining on the window pane, don't you know. What a wonderful moon we have tonight.

IMA. And our betrothal night, too. (*Goes to FERDINAND and fixes his tie.*) Oh, Ferdie, I am so happy. How did you ever come to pick me out of all the girls in the world?

FERD. (*placing arms about her waist*). I cawn't say, exactly. I am rathaw under the impression that you picked me out.

IMA. You are not sorry, are you Ferdinand?

FERD. Widiculous, don't you know.

IMA (*lays her head on FERDINAND'S shoulder and holds up her finger on which there is a diamond*). See how the light sparkles on my diamond. I wonder if the girls will notice it.

FERD. Oh, they will notice it all right. By jove, I only hope some of them don't recognize it, don't you know.

IMA. Recognize it? You didn't show it to any of them, did you, Ferdinand?

FERD. (*embarrassed*). Oh, dear no—that is—just see how lovely the moon shines through the window.

IMA. The moon seems to have gone to your head this evening.

FERD. Oh no, nothing ever goes to my head, don't you know.

IMA. I hate to tell father of our engagement. He will be so angry. Suppose we postpone telling him.

FERD. Why not tell him now and have the disagreeable affair over with?

IMA. I just hate to. You look so nice and handsome now, and goodness only knows how you will look after you tell father.

FERD. Deuced awkward, don't you know. Perhaps you better tell him.

IMA. You see, father expects to become rich and famous with this new invention of his, and he wants me to marry a title. I wish he would give up his idea of trying to talk with the other world.

FERD. That reminds me. I invited Professor Jones to come over this evening. Mr. Jones believes in the transmigration of the soul after death, and perhaps he can talk your fathaw out of his beastly notion.

IMA. I hope so, but I fear he will not be successful. They are coming now. Let's sneak out the back way before we have to stay and listen to their arguments.

FERD. Yas. Deuced clever, by jove. (*Exeunt FERDINAND and IMA.*)

Enter PROF. SPOOK and PROF. JONES, *speaking as they enter.*

SPOOK. You are all wrong, Professor Jones. You are on the wrong track entirely. It is only a theory and you have no facts on which to substantiate your claims.

(SPOOK *offers* JONES a box of cigars. JONES *takes a cigar and lights it.*)

JONES. Thanks.

SPOOK (*offering* JONES a chair). Have a chair. (*They sit down.*)

JONES. On the contrary, we have an abundance of evidence on every hand which goes to show that the soul of man, after leaving the body, takes on the form of some other animal. What kind of an animal, depends upon the life which that individual led while on earth.

SPOOK. What are some of the circumstances of which you speak?

JONES. Well, for instance, haven't you often said or done a thing and at the same time had a faint impression that the very same thing had happened to you before, in the very same manner, and at some very indefinite time in the past?

SPOOK. Well, yes, I have had that experience.

JONES. Exactly; and have felt rather foolish because you could not recall the exact circumstance. So have I. This impression is caused by the subconscious mind reverting back to a similar experience at some former stage in the progress of your soul.

SPOOK. Quite interesting. But it is not proof.

JONES. Then again, no doubt you have often been awakened from a deep slumber by a sensation of falling through space, only to discover yourself making a wild grab at the bed post. That is merely a faint recollection of the time when you sprang from limb to limb among the giant trees of the forest.

SPOOK. Convert me to your faith if you can, but don't try to make a monkey out of me.

JONES. Then no doubt you have often noticed a strange cat or dog to suddenly appear in the neighborhood. Where did that strange cat or dog come from? Answer me that if you can. It is a mystery that can be explained in no other way. You have often marveled at the faithfulness of a dog to his cruel master. His master may cuff him and kick him about, but the dog only wags his tail in devotion. The chances are that the soul of that dog was once the grandfather of that man. As for proof, what proof do you have that the spirits of the dead are flying about through the air, as you claim?

SPOOK. Very little, at present. But I expect to soon be able to establish my theory scientifically, through the use of this immortality machine.

JONES. You are a spiritualist, then?

SPOOK. No, I am not a spiritualist. And I have no use for the ouija boards and table-tippers. There is nothing to it. The whole business is simply childish.

JONES. Then how do you expect to get results?

SPOOK. I am working on an entirely different plan, strictly along scientific lines. Science tell us that the life units which go to form a man do not die, and that the usual word "death" is a misapplied term. When we "die" the infinitesimally small units composing our personality, like a swarm of bees, so to speak, simply betake themselves elsewhere and go on functioning as before. Now, this machine is built with the idea of attracting these personalities. The device is in the nature of a valve operated by electric currents in such a way that the smallest conceivable amount of energy exerted on it is multiplied many times.

JONES. Have you had any evidence that your machine was attracting the attention of a curious spirit?

SPOOK. Yes, as I have been working on it I have often felt the presence of some one near me. I have even heard a slight rustling sound when I was absolutely certain that there was no one near. As we came in I observed that the signal arms were pointing up, whereas I left them both pointing down.

JONES. Then why doesn't the spirit send you a message?

SPOOK. The chances are that when that particular spirit died there was no machine like this on earth and he doesn't know how to work the thing. He will find out one of these days. Then look out for a sensation.

JONES. What kind of a spirit do you expect to hear from first?

SPOOK. I would not be surprised if my first message came from some scientist, perhaps even a foreigner, who thoroughly understands the working of electric currents.

JONES. Perhaps your "curious spirit" is a spy who is trying to find out the secret of your invention for his own use.

SPOOK. No. There is no doubt about a spirit trying to work the machine. But in order to manipulate it, it is necessary to understand the principles upon which it works. That is the stumbling block. In fact I have reached the conclusion that it will be necessary for me to sacrifice my own life in order to teach the world how to talk with the dead. (*Takes paper from pocket and holds it in hand.*) I have here a letter of farewell already drawn up. This is my life work. And if it takes my life to accomplish it, I am ready to go.

JONES. Surely you would not be so foolish. Even if you did succeed in sending back a message, you would not be here to enjoy the fame it would bring. Why not get some worthless, good-for-nothing chap to die in your place? Don't you have some one in mind who would fit the bill?

SPOOK. Yes, my daughter's "affinity" would fit the bill exactly. Still, he wouldn't know enough to work the machine after he was dead.

JONES. It would be best to get some invalid; some one who is right on the verge of the grave, teach him to use the machine and then wait for him to die. Suppose you should take your own life and then after trying to work the machine from the other side of the grave you should want to make some improvements. Then it would be too late.

SPOOK. There is some logic to your argument, and I rather like the suggestion. I will keep it in mind and if I have a chance to get the right man I may try it.

Enter IMA. SPOOK leaves letter on table.

IMA. Excuse me father, but there is a man outside who wants to trade the sweetest, dearest, little dog for something to eat.

SPOOK. Send him away at once. You know I never allow anyone to bring a dog on these premises.

IMA. This is such a dear little fellow. Can't I keep him?

SPOOK. No. You may give the man something to eat, but make him leave his dog outside.

Enter FERDINAND. He overhears IMA.

IMA. But father, I love him so much and when I held him in my arms he rubbed his poor little cold nose against my cheek.

FERD. (*looks surprised and rubs nose; aside*). By jove!

SPOOK (*angrily*). No, I say. I won't have that dog hanging around here.

FERD. (*going to SPOOK and holding out his hands*). Weally, Professor, if you only knew how much I love her—

IMA (*taking FERDINAND by the arm and going out*). Come on, Ferdinand. We were talking about dogs, not sweethearts.

FERD. Deuced strange, by jove!

(*FERDINAND and IMA exeunt.*)

SPOOK (*going to door*). Ima!

IMA (*outside*). Yes, father.

SPOOK. You need not feed that fellow, after all. You may send him to me instead.

IMA (*outside*). All right, father.

SPOOK. There is no reason nowadays why an able bodied man should go around begging for his food. I will give him a chance to sweep out the office for his dinner.

JONES. You are quite right, Professor. But I must warn

you about your treatment of dogs. No one would want to spend his next life as a dog. Of course you may not believe as I do, but you must admit that the great number of people who go around growling at everything compares very favorably with the large number of dogs running about.

(Whining of dog is heard from outside.)

SAMBO (*outside*). Close yo' yap, you old coon chaser, or you all gwin' to lose yo' happy home, you is!

SAMBO *raps at door and then enters, carrying suitcase containing dog.*

SPOOK. Come in.

SAMBO. Yas, suh, I is in.

SPOOK. What can I do for you?

SAMBO. Am you all de gen'man what expressionized de desirification ob ma presence?

SPOOK. Yes, my daughter said you were hungry.

SAMBO. Hungry! Lawzie, boss, dat word don't begin to specicate de condition I's in. I's simply ravenous.

SPOOK. How does it come that a young, able bodied man like you is going around begging for food?

SAMBO. I's done had a very serious operation performed on me.

SPOOK. What kind of an operation?

SAMBO. I's had ma allowance cut off.

SPOOK. Indeed. In that case you should go to work. Do you want a job?

SAMBO. No, suh. I's done got a job already, I has, tryin' to keep out of work. Besides havin' de flaperation of de heart, I done swallowed ma razor, superinducin' membranous hemorage in de outer cuticle of ma liver.

SPOOK. You don't say so.

SAMBO. Yas, suh. I's right on de verge of de grave, I is. Cain't possibly live more'n a few days.

SPOOK (*aside*). Right on the verge of the grave! He's the very man I am looking for. (*To SAMBO.*) What is your name?

SAMBO. Sambo Lincoln George Washington Johnson, suh.

SPOOK. Very well, Sambo. I feel sorry for you, and I am going to give you a chance to make a living without working.

SAMBO. Dat sure sounds interestin', boss.

SPOOK. I am an inventor, and I will make you my assistant. All you will have to do is to sit in that easy chair there and watch this machine.

SAMBO. Say boss, let's see if I misunderstands you incorrectly. You say all I has to do is to set in dat-air chair and look at dat-air contraption?

SPOOK. Yes, that's all you have to do. And I will pay you a dollar an hour.

SAMBO. Well, I's pretty tired, I is, so I guess I'll just sit down and work an hour. (*Sits down.*)

SPOOK. Good. Now, this machine you are to watch is an invention of mine to talk with the spirits.

SAMBO. Spirits. (*Jumps up and starts for door.*) Excuse me, boss, I tenders ma resignation dis instant. I done forgot all about a very 'portant 'pointment I done got down town.

SPOOK (*detaining SAMBO*). Surely, you are not afraid of a little harmless spirit, are you?

SAMBO. No, suh, I ain't afraid of no spirits. I's a brave nigger, I is. We just don't associate intimately, dat's how. No, suh, spirits and me ain't on speakin' terms, we ain't.

SPOOK. Very well. I was in hopes you would take the job, at least until after dinner. (*Sniffs the air.*) I guess dinner is ready. Professor. I smell the roast chicken and fried oysters now.

SAMBO (*comes down stage and sniffs air*). Say, boss, on second consideration I withdraws ma resignation. (*Sits in chair and sniffs air.*) I suttinly does take de job. Chicken is about de fondest thing I is of.

SPOOK. Good. Now, all you have to do, in case you see a spirit, is to yell.

SAMBO. Yas, suh; I suttinly will yell, all right.

SPOOK. That is, either call or come for me. For instance, in case a spirit enters and goes to working the machine, you will be sitting here near the door.

SAMBO. No, suh. I'll be considerable distance down de road.

SPOOK. That's right; hunting for me. I see you have the right idea. Now, these wires you see here are charged with very sensitive currents of electricity, and a very slight vibration, such as would be caused by a faint sigh or moan, exerted on the sounding board, would cause these arms to operate.

SAMBO. Yas, suh. But if dere's any moanin' goin' on 'round here dis nigger won't be here, dat's all.

SPOOK. And just one thing more. My daughter tells me that you have a dog. I never allow a dog on the premises, and if I ever find it here I will shoot it on the spot. (*Turns to JONES.*) This way, Professor.

(JONES and SPOOK *exeunt.*)

SAMBO. Lawzie! I reckon dis here nigger done got himself in a pickle dis time, fo' sure. If a spirit comes snoopin' around here dis nigger'll just natu'ly evaporate. (*Opens suitcase and takes out small dog.*) Come here, you poor little old coon chaser. (*Sits down with dog in his arms.*) I reckon you all done 'bout lived your life, you is. (*Strokes dog.*) You sure am in a bad fix dis time. You all goin' git shot on de spot.

SPOOK (*calls from off stage*). Sambo!

SAMBO (*jumping up, frightened*). Yas, suh!

SPOOK (*off stage*). Come here a minute.

SAMBO. Yas, suh; I's comin'. (*Looks about stage for place to hide dog.*) Dawg-gone, what's I gwan do wid dis poor li'l old coon chaser? Reckon I'll hide him in dis old box. (*Tries to raise lid of chest, but it is held shut by NICK.*) Guess de lid am nailed down. (*Goes to spirit machine and raises lid to the box.*) Guess I'll make a spirit ob him. (*Places dog in machine and closes lid.*)

SPOOK (*off stage*). Sambo, come here this instant.

SAMBO (*starting for door*). Yas, suh. I's comin', I is.

(*Someone off stage gives an imitation of a dog howling at the moon, then manipulates the signal arms of the machine with strings. Arms should continue to operate until SPOOK receives his message.*)

SAMBO (*stops and listens*). Shut yo' head, you old coon chaser, or you-all goin' lose yo' home. (*Sees arms moving.*) Lawzie, now look what you went and done!

SPOOK *enters*.

SPOOK (*angry*). See here! Why don't you come when I call? (*Sees arms waving and becomes very excited.*) Ah! See! A spirit at last! A pencil and paper, quick! (*Grabs writing pad and paper from table.*) He is trying to send me a message. (*Watches machine as he writes on pad, and spells:*) S-A-U-S-A-G-E—. (*Signals stop. SPOOK looks at pad and reads.*) Sausage! Ah, my foreign scientist at last. (*To SAMBO.*) Look here, Sambo, see what I got out of the machine. Sausage!

SAMBO. Dat ain't nuffin', considerin' what went into it, suh.

SPOOK. At last my labors are to be rewarded! You may get your dinner if you wish, and I will watch the machine while you are gone. I may get something more. (*Sits down and watches machine.*)

SAMBO. Yas, suh. (*Starts for door. Aside.*) I done reckon he goin' git some bologna next time. Poor old coon chaser. (*Exit.*)

SPOOK. The spirit has evidently left. (*Reads from pad.*) Sausage! A rather queer message, when you come to think of it. It would never do to give that to the public. They would only laugh. Nevertheless, it has proven that my theory is correct and that the machine will work. All I need now is to wait for someone who understands the machine to die and send back a message. That will prove its authenticity beyond a doubt. Sambo says he can't possibly live more than a few weeks. But that is a long time to wait.

(*Stealthily.*) A little pinch of poison mixed in some wine would greatly reduce the time. What difference would it make, anyway, whether he dies today or a week from today? There could be no harm as long as he must die anyway. I believe I will do it. (*Opens door of small cabinet and takes out bottle of wine in which he puts some powder.*) A little of this powder taken with the wine, and he will simply pass away without pain or suffering. Perhaps, after all, I will only be doing him a favor. Who knows? (*Sets bottle and glass on table.*) I will simply leave it here on the table. Then I will teach Sambo how to use the machine and leave him to work out his own destruction.

SAMBO enters eating a piece of chicken.

SPOOK. Well, Sambo, did you get plenty to eat?

SAMBO. Say, boss, I reckon if I eats much more I's goin' be a spirit, myself.

SPOOK. You weren't gone very long.

SAMBO. No, suh, I's an efficiency eatin' expert, I is.

SPOOK. By the way, Sambo, you understand how to work this machine, don't you?

SAMBO. Yas, suh. I reckon I knows one way to make it operate.

SPOOK. That's good. And in case something should suddenly happen, or you should suddenly die, or something, do you think you could send us a message?

SAMBO. Huh? I don't calculate on dyin' till yet for a while.

SPOOK. Oh, no. Certainly not. (*Nervously.*) Just in case something did happen, or something, you know.

SAMBO (*suspicious*). Say, what you-all mean, "somethin' or somethin' "?

SPOOK. Oh, nothing at all; nothing at all. I am going to leave you now, and you can call in case you want me. There is just one thing more. I must caution you about drinking everything you find around here. Remember, it is not yours.

SAMBO. No, suh. I's strictly temperance, I is.

SPOOK. That's good. Now, if you will come with me I will give you a duster and you can improve your time by dusting off the furniture.

(SAMBO and SPOOK *exeunt.*)

(NICK *gets out of chest and comes down stage.*)

NICK. Ze nigger is spoiling all my plans. Just as I am about to discover ze secret of ze invention, he comes to guard ze machine. I must frighten him away. (*Takes sheet from cabinet and, throwing it over his head, hides behind table.*)

SAMBO *enters with feather duster. He sings or whistles as he works.*

SAMBO. No, suh. I never drinks nuffin, no-how. I's strictly temperance, I is. (*Dusts table and discovers bottle.*) Lawzie! See what am a-standin' here lookin' me in de face. (*Dusts all around bottle and then sits down in chair by the table, all the time watching the bottle. Picks up bottle, smells of it, looks about to see if anyone is watching, then sets it back on the table with a sigh.*) No, suh, I's strictly temperance, I is. I never drinks nuffin, no-how. (*NICK takes another bottle from the cabinet and substitutes it for the one on the table. Then hides behind table and moans. SAMBO is frightened.*) Lawzie! What am dat? I reckon dis here nigger needs a little bracer. (*Takes bottle from table.*) Dis am de only kind of spirits what I ain't skeered of. (*Takes cork from bottle and lays it on the table. Then pours wine into glass and sets the bottle back on the table while he drinks from glass. NICK places the cork back in the bottle while SAMBO drinks and smacks his lips.*) Dat air liquor sure am allurin'. Reckon dis here nigger just natu'ly goin' ruin dat bottle 'fore I's through. (*Tries to pour out some more wine and is surprised to find cork in bottle.*) How'd you-all get in dar, you old jumpin' jack, you? (*Takes cork from bottle, pours wine in glass and sets glass on table while he replaces cork in bottle. NICK quickly drinks the contents of the glass and replaces*

the glass on the table. SAMBO strikes the cork a final blow.) Dar, now! I reckon I's goin' poke you in, myself, dis time. *(Sets bottle back on table and tries to drink from glass. Becomes frightened when he finds it empty. Turns glass upside down.)* Dere must be a thirsty spook around here somewhere. I reckon dis nigger goin' to adjourn percipitately.

NICK *(spooky tone)*. Sambo-o-o!

SAMBO *(jumps to his feet and his knees shake)*. Oh, mamma, hold yo' little pickaninny tight in yo' arms!

NICK. Sambo-o-o! I am the ghost of the girl whose heart you broke!

SAMBO. No, suh! You's mistooked, Mr. Ghost! I ain't never done nothin'.

NICK. Sambo-o-o! Your time has come. I am going to kill you! *(NICK shoots a gun in the air. SAMBO exits with a yell.)*

SPOOK enters and is knocked over by SAMBO. NICK throws his sheet over SPOOK's head. They have a tussle and NICK finally escapes through the door. SPOOK exits, chasing him and calling for help. IMA, FERDINAND and JONES enter.

IMA. Father! What's the matter? *(Looks about room.)* Oh, dear, what has happened?

JONES. It looks to me like foul play.

FERD. It sounded as if something exploded, don't you know.

JONES. Marvelous! How did you ever figure it out?

IMA *(walking about and wringing her hands)*. I'm afraid something terrible has happened! Oh Ferdinand, can't you do something?

FERD. *(following her about, wringing his hands)*. I don't know. Weally, I never tried, don't you know.

JONES. Sambo seems to have disappeared also. He may know something of the affair.

IMA. He was alone with father. He was a perfect stranger and may be responsible for the shooting.

FERD. Mercy! I hope he is out of ammunition, don't you know.

IMA. I'm going to call the police and have them put a man on his trail at once. I feel that if we can find Sambo we can soon solve the mystery. (*Exit.*)

FERD. By jove, things are in a beastly muddle, don't you know.

JONES. Marvelous concentration of thought. How did you ever figure it out?

FERD. (*finds the letter which SPOOK left on table*). Ah, here is a letter from the Professor. It is for Ima. I will take it to her. (*Starts for door.*)

JONES. (*Stopping FERDINAND.*) Just a moment. Let me see that letter. (*Takes letter.*) It is the one he showed me this evening. I wonder if it is possible he could have changed his mind and has taken his life. If so it is better that Ima does not know. I think I will read it and see if it will throw any light on the situation. (*Opens letter and reads:*) "My darling daughter: I have decided to sacrifice my life in order to teach the world how to talk with the dead. Do not mourn for me, as I will soon be talking to you from the other world. Till then, farewell. Lovingly, your father."

FERD. Do you weally think the Professor is dead?

JONES. It must be so. He has evidently changed his mind and taken his life to try and prove his foolish theory. It's too bad. Professor Spook was a good man, in spite of his eccentricities.

FERD. (*wiping a tear from his eye with a corner of his handkerchief*). And to think what a good fathaw-in-law he would have made.

JONES (*crushes letter*). Ima must never know the real cause of her father's death. It would only break her heart.

FERD. Do you weally think the Professor will ever send us a message?

JONES. Impossible. His soul will simply transmigrate into

the form of some other animal, and continue its progress down through the ages.

FERD. Deuced strange, don't you know. What kind of an animal do you suppose he will become?

JONES. I have no way of knowing. It depends upon the kind of a life he led while on earth. For instance, haven't you often seen a mule that reminded you of some deceased person you had known?

FERD. By jove! I'll never be stubborn again, don't you know! (*Someone off stage imitates the long, dreary howl of a dog, then manipulates the signal arms on the machine. FERDINAND points at machine and gets behind JONES.*) Look! See, the bally thing is moving. It must be the professor!

JONES (*holding up his finger for silence*). Listen.

(*Imitation of dog howling is repeated.*)

FERD. By jove, there is a dog in the machine.

JONES. Marvelous concentration of thought. How did you ever figure it out? (*They go to machine and JONES holds up the lid.*) See if you can reach him.

FERD. (*sticks hand in machine and then jumps back*). Ouch! The blooming brute snapped at me.

JONES. Here; let me get him. (*Takes dog from machine and holds it in his arms.*)

FERD. By jove, where did it come from?

JONES (*imitating FERDINAND*). I rathaw think from out of the machine, don't you know.

FERD. (*looking closely at the dog*). There is something about his face that seems deuced familiar, don't you know.

JONES. Ferdinand, did Professor Spook ever have a dog?

FERD. Mercy, no! He never allowed one on the place.

JONES. Then there is no other explanation, and it must be so. Ferdinand, look closely at this dog and see if there is anything about him that reminds you of Professor Spook.

FERD. (*looking at dog*). By jove! His nose and mouth do resemble the professor. And see the expression on his face. You don't think it is the—Oh, my gwacious sakes!

JONES. It must be so. Didn't we find him in the machine trying to send us a message? And if you want further proof, just look at the dog. See, he won't even look you in the face.

FERD. By jove! Now when I marry Ima the dog will be my fathaw-in-law. Deuced awkward, don't you know.

JONES. Ima must never know. It would humiliate her for life.

IMA (*calling off stage*). Ferdinand!

JONES. Here she comes now. We must hide the dog. We'll put it back in the machine until we have a better chance to get away with it. (*Offers the dog to FERDINAND.*) Here, hold it a minute while I lift the lid.

FERD. (*backing off and waving the dog back with his hands*). Oh, no! The professor doesn't like me, don't you know.

JONES (*lifting lid and placing dog in machine*). There, Now, remember; no matter what happens, Ima must never know the fate of her father. Let us go now and see what she wants. (*JONES and FERDINAND exeunt.*)

After a moment, SPOOK thrusts his head in at the door and looks cautiously around. His hair and clothing are disheveled; one eye is black and his collar is unbuttoned. He comes quickly down stage and eagerly picks up the bottle and examines it.

SPOOK. Too late! I am too late. He has drunk the poison, and I am a murderer! Oh, why did I do it? I allowed the excitement of the moment to carry me beyond the bounds of reason. And all for nothing. I caught that thief and forced him to confess that he was a spy trying to discover the secret of my invention, and he told me that a dog that the darkey put in the machine was what made it work. I wonder if they will suspect that it was I who killed the negro. (*Tragically.*) I can almost feel the cruel handcuffs now, biting into my flesh, and see the cold, rusty bars across the windows! Oh, why did I not think of these things before it was too late? (*Listens.*) Someone is

coming. They must not see me in this condition. (*Hides under table or elsewhere in the room.*)

FERDINAND and JONES enter.

FERD. The chief of police says he will have a man out here at once.

JONES. In the meantime we must locate the body and dispose of it in such a manner that the facts will never come out. We must work fast. If you will keep Ima interested, I'll go down to the barn and see what I can find there.

FERD. Certainly, I can keep her interested for hours. I am a deucedly interesting conversationalist, don't you know.

JONES. Then go. And if you never conversated before, do it now. (JONES and FERDINAND *exunt.*)

SPOOK (*coming from hiding place*). Horrors! The police are already on the trail. Evidently Ferdinand and Jones are trying to protect me by disposing of the body. Perhaps, after all, I may be saved. (*Struck by a sudden thought.*) Heavens! What if the negro should send a message back and tell the world that I poisoned him? I would be ruined by my own invention! There is only one thing to do. I must destroy the machine! (*Takes axe and is about to demolish the machine when IMA speaks off stage.*)

IMA (*off stage*). Let's examine things in the laboratory.

SPOOK. Too late, again! They are coming. I will hide in the machine. They will never find me there. (*Drops axe and gets into the machine with the dog.*)

IMA and FERDINAND enter.

FERD. It's beastly warm in here, don't you know. Suppose we go out and sit in the garden.

IMA. I would rather spend a few moments here. Father would never allow me to even look at things in here, and I have often been consumed with curiosity, especially in regard to his new invention. I have often wondered what the inside of it was like. (IMA *is about to raise the lid when FERDINAND sits on the box.*)

FERD. I wouldn't bother about looking at these things to-

night. To-morrow will be plenty of time. Besides, I have so much to say to you about our wedding. Don't you suppose we ought to postpone it a little while now?

IMA. Oh, I don't know as that would be necessary. Somehow I don't seem to worry so much about father, since talking to the police. I feel that he will turn up in some manner.

FERD. But suppose we went ahead and were married without his consent. What would he say?

IMA. Oh, he might growl a little about it, but that's all.

FERD. (*startled*). "Growl!" Oh, yes; exactly. That is— (*Wipes his forehead with handkerchief.*) It's beastly warm this evening, don't you know.

JONES and SAMBO enter. SAMBO carries another old suitcase in which there are several chickens. JONES has him by the coat collar and boosts him along.

SAMBO. I never done steal no chickens, no-how. No, suh! I never done steal no chickens.

JONES. Then explain what you were doing down in the chicken house at this time of night.

SAMBO. Well, suh, I done heard an old rooster sort of chokin', like as though something was obstructin' his wind-pipe, an' I just natu'ly went in to see if I could stop him.

JONES. You sure stopped him all right. That rooster will never choke again. Now, tell us all you know about the shooting here this evening.

SAMBO. Lawzie, boss! Dis here nigger don't know nuffin' 'bout nuffin'!

JONES. Very well, then, you may consider yourself under arrest, unless you can remember just exactly what happened.

SAMBO. Well, boss, I was just natu'ly sittin' down, peaceable like, in dat 'ere chair, when all of a sudden I looks around an' dar stood a great big ghost, 'bout fifty feet tall, wid smoke comin' out of his ears, an' sparks flyin' out of his eyes, an' fire shootin' out of his mouth, an' he say, "Sambo-o-o, I's goin' kill you!" just like dat. An' then he

just natu'ly exploded. Lawzie, boss, dis here nigger didn't stop to 'vestigate nuffin'. He just natu'ly preambulated.

(A great commotion is heard from the machine, yelping of dog and cries of help, as SPOOK and the dog get into a fight. In trying to get away from the dog SPOOK wrecks the machine in such a manner that it falls to pieces. He climbs out. Everybody is greatly frightened at the commotion. SAMBO finally rescues the dog. IMA runs and throws her arms about her father's neck. SAMBO tucks his dog under one arm and, grabbing his suit case, starts for the door, but the suit case parts, scattering the chickens in every direction. SAMBO is trying to catch the chickens, at——)

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